

## COLONIALISM AND PATRIARCHY: DUAL OPPRESSION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN

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### ABSTRACT

*Palestinian women have played a crucial role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. They have participated in all forms of resistance—violent and nonviolent. Their struggle for personal sovereignty cannot be seen independently from the history of all Palestinians' struggle for independence. However, through their struggle for both personal and national independence, Palestinian women have encountered a number of colonial, political and social challenges. Palestinian women's participation in resistance and the challenges they encounter have been a subject-matter for a number of fictional works. One of these works is Dixiane Hallaj's *Refugee without Refuge*. The main purpose of this paper is to explore how Hallaj's *Refugee without Refuge* reflects the effects of patriarchal authority and colonial dominance on Palestinian women's status. It examines the main character's rebellious attitude against the colonial institutions as well as patriarchal domination. The paper highlights how Palestinian woman, represented by Kareema, radically defies the colonial, the patriarchal and religious norms and laws in an attempt to cope with colonial and patriarchal violence. The Paper argues that for the political independence of Palestine, the independence of the Palestinian women should be achieved first. Finally, the paper attempts to recount the enormous hardships through which Palestinian women undergo.*

**KEYWORDS:** Palestine, Israel, Women, Colonialism, Patriarchy & Gender

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### INTRODUCTION

Dixiane Hallaj's *Refugee without Refuge* is an attempt to portray Palestinian women's struggle for both personal and national freedom. The novel explores the dual oppression and victimization of Palestinian women by Zionist colonialism as well as the traditional patriarchal society and depicts Palestinian women as being deprived of personal, social and political freedom. Hence, the novel is a documentation of the victimization and suffering of the Palestinian women and their attempt to liberate themselves and their country.

The main purpose of this paper is to explore how Hallaj's *Refugee Without Refuge* reflects the effects of patriarchal authority and colonial dominance on women's status. It examines Kareema's rebellious attitude against the colonial institutions as well as patriarchal domination. The paper highlights how Kareema radically defies the colonial, the patriarchal and religious norms and laws in an attempt to cope with colonial and patriarchal violence. Finally, the paper attempts to recount the enormous hardships through which Palestinian women represented by Kareema undergo. Before analyzing the novel, it will be more convenient to start with a brief survey of Palestinian women's participation in national resistance.

Palestinian women's involvement in the resistance movement pre-dates the Israeli colonization. Palestinian women have been active during Palestinian revolts against the British. During that time, the role of

women was largely nonviolent and was based on grassroots activities. During the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (the 1920s), the role of Palestinian women in the resistance movement was a supportive one. They participated in demonstrations and strikes protesting the systematic Zionist usurpation of their lands and demanding the cancellation of the Balfour Declaration. This, however, does not suggest that they did not participate in the armed struggle. They “bore a major responsibility for sustaining armed resistance largely undertaken by men by trading in/selling their jewelry for rifles, as well as supplying food, arms, and information to the fighters” (Alsaafin NP). Describing women’s participation in the early stages of resistance movements, Ellen Fleischman writes: “despite most historians’ dismissive references to Palestinian women’s activity during the Mandate period as ‘bourgeois,’ politically ‘unaware,’ and ‘passive,’ these women had established an organized and often militant movement that was actively involved in social, political, and national affairs” (16).

Women’s early participation in resistance paved the way for the establishment of the first Palestine Women’s Union in 1929 in Jerusalem by women activists such as Melia Sakain and Zalikha Shehab. Such “gatherings played a major role in galvanizing Palestinian women to participate in the political arena and set a stage for the formation of some independent women’s movements” (Yaregal 127).

In the 1930s, Palestinian women’s national involvement increased tremendously and their political awareness reached its highest level. In 1933, a women’s organization called *Zahrat Al-Okhowan* (the Chrysanthemum Flowers) was formed in Yafa. Originally established as a social organization, *Zahrat al-Uqhawan* was involved in fighting the Israeli armed gangs until the fall of Yafa in 1948. Beside *Zahrat Al-Okhowan*, two other organizations appeared during this period—The Arab Women’s Association (AWA) and the Arab Women’s Union (AWU) in Jerusalem. The two organizations were very prominent and organized massive demonstrations in cities such as Jaffa and Nablus.

Till now, women’s participation in resistance was not gender-specific participation. Women were seen as “protecting their land and properties without giving much thought to the feminist nature of the problem” (Yaregal37). Protecting and reclaiming the land can be seen as “an early indication of their social and political awareness in which feminist issues played a major” (Yaregal37). Women’s participation in violent and nonviolent resistance is very significant. It shows their willingness to engage in the man-like and even violent behavior. They, thereby, started defying the cultural and conventional norms that mapped man’s domain and prescribed and limited the visibility of women.

The year 1948 witnessed what Palestinians call Al-Nakbah—the catastrophe—which changed the life of Palestinians beyond recognition. Al-Nakbah caused the dispersion of approximately 800,000 Palestinian who became refugees. The outbreak of the 1948 War between Arabs and Israel created a new reality as a result of the uprooting and expulsion of the Palestinian people. Further, the war was augmented by the collapse of the Palestinian economy and social life. These changes imposed new tasks on the Palestinian women “and forced them to expand their structures in order to be able to offer relief and social services to needy families” (Kuttab 105). Due to such changes, Palestinian women “were tasked with performing social activities that were earlier rejected in rural areas before the Nakba, such as leaving their homes to earn an income through employment” (Alsaafin).

The creation of Israel and the subsequent exodus of Palestinians to the neighboring countries led to the scattering of the Palestinian women into different refugee camps outside their homeland. A direct consequence of this historical event was women’s retreat from the political activism and a going back to social and charitable work. They devoted their time to the survival of their families and communities. Describing the hardships that the Palestinian women faced after the 1948

war, Woineshet T. Yaregal writes:

The outcome of the displacement brought unimaginable hardship on women and children. While Palestinian men were engaged in resisting the occupation directly, women were left to assume responsibilities on two fronts: Primarily, they have to fulfill their role as caregivers to their families, kinship, and to the community at large. At the same time, they participate in the struggle for a Palestinian homeland and return of refugees. (128)

Thus, the creation of the State of Israel made the involvement of women in the political arena absolutely essential and encouraged Palestinian women to fight along with men in their protesting against the creation of an Israeli state in Palestine.

The period between 1948-65 witnessed the emergence of a number of women's organizations inside and outside Palestine such as the General Union of the Palestinian Women (GUPW). The establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 was a turning point in the history of Palestinian women's participation in the political and social affairs. The members of the Palestinian Women Union were represented in the founding meeting of the PLO held in Jerusalem. The most prominent organizations outside Palestine include The Arab Women's Union in Lebanon and The Employment Association of Palestinian Refugees in Damascus. It was during this time that "the women of Palestine really voiced their significance in the struggle, and perhaps made the different political factions be conscious of what was to come of this group of the society. This was truly a period where many Palestinian women genuinely believed that they would also have a stake in their government when statehood is realized" (Yaregal39).

The 1967 six-day war referred to as al-Naksa was another important event in the history of Palestine. Again thousands of Palestinians were displaced due to Israeli expansion. The new events brought new realities for the Palestinian women. Due to the loss of their land and source of livelihood, Palestinian women became the sole providers for their families in refugee camps. What added salt to injury is the absence of men who were either engaged in armed struggle, killed or detained. Women's participation in resistance continued in this period whether in armed resistance or social work. Women also joined different political parties in this period. In spite of "this increased role of women in both public and private spheres, the perception on many gender issues had not changed, and as a result, did not really contribute to a more active engagement of women in the political arena" (Yaregal40).

The first Intifada (1987-92) was another critical event in the history of Palestine. The first intifada enabled Palestinian women to assume the roles that had been preserved for men. The participation of women in the first intifada" is recognized for its unprecedented engagement of women in a genuine democratic activism and mass mobilization for non-violent participation. It was also a defining movement for Palestinian women to reveal the significance of their participation in their society in which their involvement runs counter to the patriarchy" (Yaregal41). During the first Intifada, women established "their own small-scale community industries such as cheese making, jam making, and community gardening as an alternative to enhance their source of income" (Yaregal42). They also established community schools to replace the ones shut down or ruined by Israel. However, "while the women's role in the Intifada was recognized as crucial, their social status did not rise nor were they involved in political decision-making processes" (AlSaafin).

In the 1990s the NGO came to existence along with many other women's centers. With the establishment of these independent organizations, "local women's centers attempted to address women's issues such as domestic violence,

personal status laws, honor killings and forced marriage, etc. Palestinian women didn't just become mobilized to bring about change in their gender-specific issues but also began forecasting their political role in the new, free and independent Palestine" (Yaregal130). Although women were active in non-governmental organizations, civil societies and associations, their participation in Palestinian government was weak and marginalized.

The second Intifada was characterized by its lack of women's involvement "because the socio-political reality of the situation on the ground created such a perplex role for women in the struggle" (Yaregal43). The emergence of different religious factions with each faction trying to impose its own version of religious as well as traditional rules played an important role in determining the role of women in the national struggle. Women's role was pushed back to home and family matters. The male-dominated government would exclude women from all forms of negotiations with the government of Israel.

To summarize, it can be said that Palestinian women have participated in all forms of resistance violent and nonviolent "for as long as the Palestinian people have fought for national liberation" (Yaregal52). Their struggle for personal sovereignty cannot be seen independently from the history of all Palestinians' struggle. However, through their struggle for both personal and national independence, Palestinian women have encountered a number of colonial, political and social challenges. Palestinian women's participation in resistance and the challenges they encounter have been a subject-matter for a number of literary works. One of these works is Dixiane Hallaj's *Refugee without Refuge*. This paper is an attempt to investigate and discover those challenges and measure their effect on the Palestinian women freedom fighters in Hallaj's novel.

### **Hallaj's Refugee without Refuge**

The central character of the novel is Kareema. Kareema is introduced as an energetic, "intelligent, caring, and quite wonderful young woman" (139) who is trying to liberate both her country and herself. She studies at the Girls' High School. She is a model of Palestinian women who are educated, intellectual and participates in the Palestinian struggle. Besides being a student, she joins YFP (Youth For Palestine). Her job in the YFP organization is to collect news articles that deal with Palestine. She searches the internet for foreign newspaper articles about Palestine and prints them out for the archives. While working in the organization, she is introduced to a new type of freedom fighters. This raises her awareness and understanding of the realities of occupation and organized resistance. With such new awareness, she starts organizing students in her school to join demonstrations. Her work for the YFP shows her concern for the Palestinian cause and sympathy for the Palestinian people. This sympathy along with her concern is the result of her revolutionary and rebellious spirit. Her conversation with her cousins Imahn and Amal shows her mature understanding of the Palestinian problem. In the conversation, she gives a precise description of "the reality of living under military occupation" and how the Palestinians get "shot" "beaten" "jailed" by the Israelis (35). This understanding of the events, helps produce in her the self-respect and courage that persist in the face of danger. She knows very well that the Palestinians are helpless, waiting for a solution from outside. But this will never happen. Palestinians themselves have to solve their problem. She realizes that Palestinians should not expect support from anywhere else. Hence, her involvement is the result of her understanding and commitment despite the fact that the tasks she has undertaken are fraught with danger.

Kareema is a victim of colonial oppression. She has experienced first-hand the hard life in refugee camps. She was born in Kalandia Refugee Camps and still lives there. She has experienced the hardships of curfews when they have to spend days indoor and checkpoints where they are subject to search every day. She is disgusted with life under occupation

and declares: “I don’t want to spend the rest of my life in a refugee camp...I don’t want anyone to live like this” (36). Kareema’s participation in the national struggle is the outcome of her suffering in the camp. Israel has made their life a difficult one by imposing constant curfews, sieges, and checkpoints. The political conditions in the refugee camps encouraged Kareema and other Palestinian women to rebel against Israeli forces. Her participation in the national resistance is a way to encounter and confront the violence that the Israeli occupation unleashes against her people.

Further, Kareema engages in politics and resistance because she believes that the liberation of Palestine will happen one day: “I believe it will happen” (36). However, this will not happen “until a lot more people want it to happen” (36). Here Kareema believes that one day Palestine will be free but they have to make it free. It is their duty to do it. And to do it, the world has to know about the Palestinian dilemma and it is the duty of the Palestinians to make the world know. They have to voice their agony and pain. Without being heard none knows about them:

How often do you think people in the rest of the world think about us and our problem? I’ll tell you—the vast majority of them only think about us when we make international news. One small thing we can do is to keep our problem visible. We make things happen. This may not be a big deal; it certainly won’t win a war, but it is *something* we can do besides just sitting and hoping we get our country back. We just sat, and hoped, and waited for decades; and the longer we waited, the worse things became for us. (36)

Kareema has thought of the ways to make the Palestinian problem visible. She reaches the conclusion that only students can do it. “So I thought,” she says, “about who can make the most noise, who can be visible. It’s pretty clear the students are the ones who can do it. In fact, we are the only ones who can do this” (36). Her belief in the ability of the students to voice their problem for the world makes her join the YFP movement. She believes that liberation of Palestine is the responsibility of the student and the youth in general: “We are the ones who can do it, so we are the ones who have to do it” (36). She adds: “it is up to the youth to do the protesting—we are the only ones who *can* do it. We have to make things happen. We have to learn how to make people listen to us” (37). Kareema knows “the value of worldwide public opinion and the usefulness of grassroots movements” (83). This Gandhian philosophy demonstrates her belief in the power of the common people. She believes in her ability to bring about transformations, to change the political reality of her country. She along with young men and women are the only hope of the future.

Further, Kareema joins and participates in resistance for two more reasons: first, her commitment to the national cause and love for and loyalty and allegiance to the homeland. She joins the resistance not because she wants to live in heaven, but because she wants to live freely on the Palestinian land without occupation and oppression. She has a deep abiding belief that the Israelis have no right to be here. She knows very well that the Israelis have occupied her homeland and expelled the Palestinians from it—an event that has caused the Palestinians a lot of suffering. She believes in the Palestinian cause, the Palestinians’ right to live in their own country. Further, she is convinced about the righteousness of the political position of the YFP: “I really believe in what we are doing, and I am not willing to give it up” (38). Second, she participates in resistance because she wants to remind the world that there is a homeland called Palestine and an occupied people called Palestinians who have been suffering from oppression, killings, and humiliation at the hands of the Israelis. It is her strong conviction that without speaking out for their cause, to gain attention for their cause, none else will speak. Kareema’s need to ‘let the world know about Occupied Palestine’, echoes Tawfiq Zayyad’s poem in which he writes: “Let the whole world hear/We shall starve, go naked, be sliced into pieces / But we shall never submit” (qtd. in Abdo 134). She joins the resistance out of her love for her people and urges to help them. She cannot tolerate the

humiliations that the Palestinians experience at the hands of the Israelis. As Ghada, a Palestinian freedom fighter says: “When a person decides to take up the path of resistance to defend her people, she does this because she refuses to see her people enduring all the suffering, killing, starvation, and oppression they undergo living under colonial occupation” (qtd. in Abdo135).

Since the moment she joined the YFP, Kareema has to face so many obstacles. She has to avoid people so that they will not inform her parents. She has to leave for work in the morning but she is afraid of being seen by her classmates or younger cousins. For this reason, she has to leave home at dawn claiming that she has the extra study with one of her classmates. As a way of camouflage, she starts wearing a long coat and a shoulder bag. She is using a shoulder bag rather than a backpack because the shoulder bag makes her look less like a student. She is also keeping her long coat buttoned so that her school uniform is invisible, and she does not attract any attention walking around during school hours. Moreover, by wearing her school uniform every day, her parents will never suspect she was not going to school. All these tricks and plots show her acumen.

Kareema is an honest girl. She does not like telling lies or deceiving her family. When she tells her mother that she is meeting with a friend in the mornings to do some extra studying, she does not feel happy with such a vindication: “She grimaced at the thought. Once you told one lie it seemed that you had to tell another...and another. She hated all this deception-especially the fact that she was hiding her work from her family” (28). Somewhere else in the novel, she expresses her awful feelings about lying: “It’s Mom and Dad...They trust me and they think I am going to school every day and leaving early in the morning to do extra studying. In truth, I haven’t been to school for almost a month. I can’t concentrate on school work...it just doesn’t seem important compared to this. But every minute of every day I feel awful about lying to everyone. I should be proud of what I’m doing. I *am* proud of the work I’m doing, but I am so ashamed of the lying and sneaking. I can’t live like this—not to mention that they will find out when everyone comes home with grades except me” (38). She feels uncomfortable with all this, and, therefore, resolves that one day she will inform her parents. She thinks that her family will understand the importance of her work: “Surely they would understand how important her work was; surely they would be proud of her” (28).

The first challenge that faces Kareema is her own father. His name is Ziad and he is a religious man with “ironclad archaic beliefs” (29). He is a dispassionate, unfriendly, dictatorial and totally self-centered man. Ziad is a man known for his “violent temper” (138). Describing him, Hallaj writes: “Ziad’s temper was legendary in the family. Adding his large size and naturally booming voice to the temper made him very intimidating. He described himself as decisive and firm,...others describe his tendency to make quick decisions and never back down from them in less complimentary terms” (38). Ziad is very obstinate. He “had never changed his mind in his life. He equated changing his mind about going back on his word—regardless of the fact that he may have received new information” (137). He is stubbornly persistent. Speaking about him, Kareema says: “Once he makes up his mind he refuses to listen to anyone—and he can sometimes make up his mind in an instant. He never listens to the other side of a story. I’m not sure he ever listens to anything except his own voice. Even when he watches the news on television, he runs his own commentary, and you know he can’t be listening to that either” (38). Kareema and her father are almost always at odds with each other because their views are almost always in opposition.

Ziad’s dictatorial and tyrannical nature is seen throughout the novel. It is he who decides what Kareema should wear. Since joining the YFP, Kareema starts wearing the keffiyeh. Undoubtedly, she sometimes wears it because of the

cold weather. However most of the time she wears it because it is a symbol of Palestine. Wearing the traditional keffiyeh has political as well as cultural dimensions insofar as it often constitutes a self-conscious rejection of colonial dominance and patriarchal authority. Her father knows the hidden meanings of Keffiyeh and therefore objects to wearing it. One evening when she is going to visit her grandma with her parents, she wears the Keffiyeh. Her father does not like it: "Why do you have to wear that thing?... It is not ladylike and it is certainly not becoming" (31). Her father's objection makes Kareema "tense with suppressed anger. She knew her father objected to the keffiyeh for the same reason she wore it—because it was a symbol of Palestine, and it was worn by the freedom fighters" (31). However, Kareema claims that "It keeps me warm" (31). Though she knows what her father means, she does not argue with him. She even has stopped talking to him about anything having to do with Palestine or any topic that really matters to her. And to stop her father from criticizing her and to not give him an opportunity to tell her to remove the keffiyeh, she steps out onto the sidewalk, preferring to stand in the cold rather than hearing her father's rude comments. This situation with her father convinces her that he will never approve of her work in YFP. Talking to herself, she says: "if he can't even stand to see you wearing a keffiyeh, you know there's not a chance in the world that he'll approve of your work" (31). The question that is nagging at her now is: will he approve her work with the YFP?

Kareema is absolutely unregenerate. She knows very well that her father will object to her work with the YFP and she knows also the reasons: "He would object to her work for two reasons. One reason was that she was working for YFP and he totally disagreed with their objectives. It wasn't that he didn't want a free Palestine, but he thought he could just sit on his fat behind until it was handed to him on a silver platter...The other reason he would object to her work thought Kareema darkly, was because *she* had made the decision. *He* had to make all the decisions" (29). Though she knows very well that her father will never approve of her work with YFP, she continues her work. Ziad is an absolute dictator and making a decision means freedom. It is this freedom that frightens him. However, her father's dictatorship does not compel her to live a life of subordination. She makes her own decision and chooses her own path.

Her father's harsh treatment of her makes Kareema insensible to his feeling. She does not care if her behavior pleases him or not. She starts to concentrate on herself. This is clear when her brother Bilal tells her that it would please their father if she stops wearing a keffiyeh, she replies that "it pleases me to wear it" (31). Her abhorrence of her father reaches its climax when she says: "The way I see it, if only one of us can be pleased, it might as well be me" (31). She challenges her father and the absolute patriarchal power which he represents. These statements clearly show her rebellious nature. She has made her own decision to free herself from the patriarchal shackles represented by her father.

Kareema's father is self-opinionated. He always wants to impose his sovereignty on his in-laws and other members of the family and constantly exerts his dominance on others. Moreover, he is an arrogant and self-centered man. His arrogance and self-centeredness make Kareema hates him. She expresses her displeasure with his making-decision nature. The narrator says: Kareema "hates her father making decisions for everyone" (33). When he visits his in-laws along with his family, he stops at Ali's house and decides that the grandma should go to Ali's house without any respect for others' opinions. Kareema "ground her teeth in anger at the way her father thought he could make decisions for everyone else" (33). Kareema's grandma is an old woman. She cannot even walk. However, instead of going to her, he orders others to bring her. Such behavior makes Kareema seethes "with anger and resentment toward her father" (33). All these statements and actions reveal Kareema's abhorrence of her father and her determination to overthrow his dominance.

Kareema's antagonism to her father is mingled with fear. She fears him more than the armed Israelis: "How can I be less afraid of armed soldiers in the streets than of my own father?" (39). When she is informed that her name is on the list and she will be arrested, she thinks of her father and not of the soldiers: "as much as being on 'the list' frightened her, her father's reaction frightened her even more" (107). She thinks of staying with a friend instead of going home. But this will make her father angrier. She thinks about going to her uncle Ali's house, but she knows her father would not approve of that either: "going anywhere other than home was not an option" (107). Somewhere else in the novel, Kareema "talked about how miserable life had been lately, enduring active antagonism from her father whenever they were in the same room"(148). Her father directs this 'active antagonism' against her because she represents a treat to the patriarchal domain. She is a woman trespassing man's domain; she is a woman mixing with politics.

Ziad is a very rude and vulgar man. He lacks common sense. He is aggressive and domineering. When Muhammad comments that "Palestine has been on the news and people are continuing to take our plight seriously...For the first time in over 50 years, the world does not forget us as soon as the newscast is over! Maybe it isn't all the YFP but they are certainly pulling their weight" (42). He scolds him saying: "I can't believe that you, of all people, would feel that way...You are a day laborer and you probably haven't earned a full week's wages in months" (42). With this rude remark, Kareema feels her face grow red with embarrassment and anger. She believes that such a remark "was an unconscionable remark for her father to make!" (43). Her uncles are disgusted and offended by Ziad's snobbery, arrogance, and condescending attitude. He, by this remark, flaunts his superiority. Feeling angry with her father, she declares that she has already joined the organization two weeks ago: "I have already joined the YFP, and I have decided to leave the school and work for the organization full time. Not only have I made the decision, I did it two weeks ago and have been working ever since" (43). So, her father's behavior gives her the power to announce her decision. Her decision to work against her father's will, is, as Richter-Devroe demonstrates, "a tactic to subvert established power configurations" (40). This decision which is made in a moment like this shows her rebellious and strong will. It is a decision not to overthrow her father dominance but to overthrow the patriarchal yoke altogether.

Ziad's wickedness reaches its climax when the Israeli soldiers arrest Kareema. Kareema is arrested in front of her father who never protests. He shouts at her saying: "Look what you've done!" (110). Kareema is astonished by his behavior. She does not believe that he "was shouting at *her*! He was standing there in his bare feet with his face red as a beet, shouting at *her*!" (110). He blames her for bringing the soldier to his home: "You've brought soldiers into my home! This is all your fault! If you had behaved yourself this would never have happened!" (110). Instead of supporting his daughter when she is in need, he forsakes her. He leaves her alone at the mercy of the Israeli soldiers. She wonders: "How could he blame this on her? How dare he be shouting at her?" (110). Later on, commenting on his reaction, Kareema says: "Father never protested...to tell you the truth, I wasn't sure if I was more afraid of the soldiers or angry at him. He just stood there yelling at me that it was my own fault as the soldiers took me away" (123). While Kareema is proud of herself during The Land Day demonstration as a leader among the girls, she feels extremely humiliated when her father shouts at her. This humiliation obliterates the success she had just achieved. Here Hallaj portrays skillfully how Palestinian women are defeated by the conventional social traditions. This defeat affects their participation in the national resistance. To be active participants in the national struggle, these women have to be liberated first from patriarchal restrictions.

By depicting Ziad as a religious man, Hallaj suggests that Arab men in general and Palestinians in particular, are victims of some religious doctrines which have been misinterpreted by Muslim Sheikhs and Mullahs. Even those who



believe in the liberal progressive concepts, they are unable to put their beliefs into practice because of traditional social restrictions. So, Kareema is a victim of the victim. Further, Hallaj's portrayal of Ziad as a religious man is an attempt to link Arabs' attitude towards women with Islam. Here religion is highlighted as another issue that dominates man-women relationships and hinders women's freedom among Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular. Moreover, by making Ziad a religious man, Hallaj wants to say that this backwardness is restricted to religious men only. I am not going to discuss women and Islam here. However, it can be said that, according to Hallaj, the patriarchal authority and power is reinforced by religious dogma. By presenting Ziad as a religious man and patriarchal at the same time, it seems that Hallaj is trying to establish a relationship between the two—Islam and patriarchy.

Kareema's father represents the long-standing traditions which no longer have a place in the new Palestinian political and social realities. He is a symbol of religious constraints which surely delay both national/political and social liberation. Kareema's action is an attempt to free herself from these traditional restraints, represented by her father's patriarchal power. Her rejection of traditions of her conservative patriarchal society can be seen as a constitutive part of the revolutionary action. Her determination to join YFP strikes the dominance of her father. So, it is Kareema's turn to terminate her father's dominance. Kareema's rejection of the traditional values and the Patriarch authority is the result of her political consciousness and the urgent need to free her home. As Suha Sabbagh writes: Palestinian women's "priorities have shifted from protecting the traditional values at all costs to risking everything in order to loosen the grip of occupation" (62). This transformation generated a new feminist consciousness which remained at the background of their struggle for freedom politically and socially.

Hallaj is of the opinion that, in order to liberate the Palestinian women and land, Palestinian men need to be liberated first. This has been declared by other Palestinian writers also. In an interview Sahar Khalifeh says that women's liberation can be realized only when men obtain their freedom: "When you say 'the liberation of women,' you cannot liberate the women before liberating the men. Therefore both of them should be liberated in order to have the liberated women" (qtd. in Mohammadi 75). Hallaj, like Khalifeh, believes that the Palestinians will never free their motherland "unless they dispose of the patriarchal system and support women's rights" (ibid).

Ziad's lack of intellectual acuity and short understanding of the Palestinian problem are seen throughout the novel. He blames the Palestinian young revolutionaries and not the Israelis. In his reply to Ali's comment, he says: "You hit the nail on the head... Things are NOT what they were—and one of the reasons for this is the young people stirring up trouble all the time! If they just stayed home and minded their own business the soldiers would stay out of the camp, and we could get on with our lives. Things would be better" (42). This reveals his shallow understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He chooses to remain conveniently oblivious to the Palestinian problem. With people such as Ziad, Palestine is bound to fall into oblivion. While Ziad sets at home waiting for some miracles to bring back Palestine, his daughter is certainly not content to sit and wait for such a miracle or any other solution to be devised by politicians somewhere else. Despite her young age, she seems to be frustrated by the passivity of people such as her father.

While the first section of this paper has been devoted to the discussion of patriarchal oppression and women victimization, this section will discuss the colonial oppression of the Palestinian women. Put in other words, the second challenge that Kareema encounters is oppression at the hands of the colonial authorities. Kareema is detained for her active involvement in anti-colonial resistance. She is arrested for her participation in a demonstration against the Israeli occupation on The Land Day. Political detention forms another topos in Hallaj's novel. It is the beginning of a mysterious

journey awaiting Kareema. Violence against Kareema starts the moment she is arrested. Just in front of her home and family, the soldier “slammed her across the face with his rifle butt, knocking her to the ground” (110). He kicks her with his boots in the abdomen. The Israelis arrest her to show their omnipotence and omnipresence. They know everyone in the camp. They know the freedom fighters or the abusers as they refer to them and peace-loving ones. No one can question the authority of Israelis. In other words, Kareema’s arrest shows that Israelis know everything about each and every Palestinian. It shows that Palestinians are under constant surveillance and control.

Hallaj masterfully gives the reader a vivid picture of life inside Israeli jails. In prison, Kareema is “mentally and psychologically in a different world, thinking of ways she will act and how she will respond to and/or resist her interrogators” (Abdo 146). Jail is a new unnerving and frightening experience for her. Kareema opens her eyes and groans. She is in the jail, lying on a cement floor in a cell with more women than bunks: “She was very cold and everything hurt. Her head hurt; her feet hurt; everything in between hurt. As the youngest and the newest resident of the cell, she didn’t rate a bunk” (111). The jail is very cold and the blanket is very small. She is unable to sleep due to the uncomfortable sleeping facilities. There she is astonished by what she witnesses. There are a number of women prisoners and Kareema takes comfort in the presence of other women. The description of the women in the jail shows the brutality of the Israeli occupation: “Some of them were sullen; some of them were morose; all of them were fellow human beings, fellow Palestinians” (111). The women are held in appalling, and over-crowded conditions: “Kareema didn’t think she had ever seen so many women in one room that were as quiet as these were” (111). They sleep on the floor for lack of beds and have no blankets to cover themselves at night. One of the women in the jail Advises her: “Here we don’t ask questions, and we don’t give any information. There are collaborators planted among us who relay everything to the guards...Don’t be naïve, and don’t be too quick to judge others” (112).

During detention, Kareema is taken for interrogations three times while she is in the jail. When she returns to her cell after the first interrogation, “She had a lot to think about: no one had shouted at her or threatened her; no one had beaten her, or broken any bones, or put a bag over her head, or hurt her in any way. While she was grateful, she was also puzzled”(114). The next day Kareema is called out of the cell again. She is escorted to a different room and one guard went in with her. The room is empty. Kareema and Moshe, the Israeli soldiers who escort her from the cell to the interrogation room, are in the room. Nothing happens. Moshe escorts her back to her cell. Next day Moshe comes and collects her from her cell. It is Saturday (Sabbath). But this time he takes her not to an interrogation room but a storage area. She feels sheer terror as the word RAPE takes over her consciousness. When Moshe sends her back to the cell, he tells her in Arabic “Until tomorrow, sweetheart” (117). Kareema is accused of being a collaborator. She is not beaten during the interrogations and the Israeli soldier calls her “sweetheart”. Furthermore, she has been taken for interrogation on Saturday, a day during which neither interrogating officers are on duty nor interrogations take place. The other women suspect her. She tries to defend herself but in vein: “‘Please,’ she addressed them all, ‘please believe me. I did nothing. He did not dishonor me. I swear it’” (117). She cries and begs and pleads with the women to believe her. One of the women tells her why they do not believe her: “Do you know what day it was yesterday?... It was Saturday. They do not interrogate prisoners on Saturday. There was only one officer on duty. That’s why we don’t believe you. Today you weren’t gone long enough for any kind of questioning. That’s why we don’t believe you” (117). The woman adds: “You weren’t taken for interrogation, and you don’t seem to have suffered any injuries from a forced encounter. That is why we don’t believe you” (117). Then she spits at Kareema and turns her back on her. What happened is that “One of the guards told everyone that she bought her release with sexual favors” (127/8). So, they “accused her of buying leniency with sexual favors, and they

labeled her a collaborator” (128). Accused, Kareema could do no more than to swear that what she said is true. By spreading this rumor, the Israelis have announced her death sentence. Instead of killing her, the fanatics in the camp will do it.

Being a collaborator means she has a short life. Fanatics are there waiting for informants and collaborators. Kareema, therefore, feels hopeless and helpless. She does want to die in this way: “This is not the way I want to die,” she thinks (208). Since the moment she joined the resistance, Kareema knows that her life will be short. One day she will die at the hands of enemy soldiers. This makes her feel proud because it shows her patriotism and sacrifice for the sake of motherland. She has never thought that she will die at the hands of Palestinian fanatics for being a traitor.

As long as Kareema could remember she had always known there was a chance that she would die at the hands of an enemy soldier. Thinking about it made Kareema sad for a life cut short, but it also made her proud that it would show the world that she cared enough to make the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom of her people, the thought of being ambushed and killed by one’s own people for being a collaborator was unbearable. Not only would it be a shameful death, but what made it unbearable was the knowledge that it was undeserved. Kareema had lived her life as a patriot, and she was sure she could accept a patriot’s death.(208/9)

After accusing her of being a collaborator, she sits on the floor crossing her arms over her knees resting her head on her folded arms. Kareema “allowed her tears to flow. She did not shake with sobs; there were only tears. Self-pity overwhelmed her, and the echo of ‘collaborator’ haunted her mind. How could they think *she* was a collaborator? She had given up her dream of university education; she had forced the wrath of her father; she had worked herself to exhaustion for Palestine” (118). The psychological effects of the accusation are enormous. Kareema, who has sacrificed everything for the sake of Palestine is now labeled as a collaborator. Everything she has been building seems to collapse before her eyes.

What the Israelis want is to send a message to other female prisoners that informants and collaborators do exist among the prisoners. They also want to destroy the morale of Palestinian female prisoners including Kareema:

This was not about her at all! She wasn’t important enough for the soldiers to make up an elaborate plan to discredit her. The charade had more to do with breaking the morale of the prisoners than breaking Kareema! This prison was a miserable place with no break from the despair. There was no comfort to be taken from fellow prisoners; there was no place to relax and recover from the onslaught of questioning and fear. This was all about reinforcing that atmosphere of fear and distrust. Kareema was merely a tool to prove that there were informers among the prisoners. Destroying the morale of all the prisoners was worth the charade.(119)

They do succeed in their plan. Though Kareema is not sexually abused, other women believe that she has bought her release with sexual favors. The Israelis have used Kareema’s body as a site of oppression and victimization to silence her. They know that women in the jail will spread the rumor that she has sex with the enemy. Kareema is doomed for two reasons. First, she knows that by branding her as a collaborator her life is almost finished. This shows how Israeli colonization shapes the Palestinian women’s personalities and destinies. Second, Kareema is doomed due to the cultural and traditional norms of the Arab world where sexual relations outside marriage, rape included are generally understood primarily as assaults on men’s honor. And to restore that honor, the blood must be shed. Nothing washes that stained honor except blood. That is why when Moshe tells her “sorry”, she thinks “of turning around and telling him that he had pronounced her death sentence and sorry wouldn’t help” (121).

Kareema's new experience in the prison shows how, to use Nahla Abdo's words "women's bodies are transformed into sexualized and racialized objects stripped by the colonial state in general and the prison authorities more specifically of any and all human meaning, and thus these bodies are turned into a tool of oppression" (14). They use these tactics to force women into submission:

Still, the use of women's bodies and sexuality by the colonial state, and especially by its prison institutions, represents a prime tactic, or rather strategy, of control used against women's political activism. Women's bodies and sexuality are rendered a prime site of humiliation, subjugation, and victimization. This is done not only through direct acts of sexual torture but also through sexual psychological torture as well. For example, the fabrication of stories about women's sexuality and the threatening of female detainees with the publication of such stories among family members and their wider community are well-known tactics used by prison authorities to force women into submission. (Abdo 21)

Abdo adds "Women's bodies and sexuality become the colonial state's prime means of controlling women and threatening their families (Ibid 22). Sexual harassment is used as a mechanism of silencing and subjugating Palestinian women. Further, sexual threatening and torture are techniques used by the Israelis to get information from the detainees. Nahla Abdo writes: "Several women interviewed said their interrogators threatened to tell their brothers or other male family members that they were sexually deviant and slept around" (161). She adds:

female Palestinian political detainees experience sexual abuse, molestation, a threat of rape and even rape more frequently than do men. Playing on their own imagined stereotypes of Arab culture, especially the traditional norms concerning sexuality, Israeli military officers and prison authorities deliberately target Palestinian female political detainees and victimize them sexually. (162)

Hence, sexual harassment is used by the Israelis for the variety of purposes: for getting information or silencing the victims.

Kareema's ultimate destruction is seen when her father disowns her. When she goes home after being released, her father does not even open the door for her. He has been informed by a women informant that his daughter has bought her release with sex. And thus, he accuses her of bringing "shame on the family" and asks her "to go back to my Israeli lover and let him feed and clothe me" (125). Instead of defending, protecting and supporting his daughter, he accuses her of bringing disgrace to his house. Speaking to Kareema's uncles, he says:

Kareema has brought the ultimate disgrace to this house. I don't know what she told you, but remember that she has a history of deception and twisting the truth. Regardless of what she may have told you, I have it on good authority that she acted improperly with an Israeli soldier. Surely even you should be able to see that she must be married immediately. She is very lucky that I have such extensive contacts. I was able to find a good match for her, even though she is damaged goods. (139).

He speaks about his daughter as if she were "a sack of potatoes" (139). Referring to his daughter as 'damaged goods' points to the low status of the woman in this society. Finally, he declares: "She got herself into this mess, and she can figure her own way out of it. She has disgraced my house and in my opinion, she is no longer my daughter" (140). Ziad's reaction to the rumor has multiple explanations: first, he is punishing her for her possible transgression of socially enforced codes of conduct. Second, as a member of a patriarchal society, the possibility of having sex with the Israeli

soldier represents a threat to his power and justifies his need to re-inscribe his ownership of his daughter.

## CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, Kareema violates/transgresses the social customs but not morals. She is a victim of social and political oppression. Nevertheless, Kareema stands as a confident, positive, yet rare, example of a strong woman who is able to face the harsh realities of occupation and constrained social traditions with patience and defiance. Kareema is a representative of the Palestinian woman who is ready to sacrifice the dearest for the sake of national liberation. Kareema, whose Arabic name means the generous, sacrifices her family, her life, her happiness and future for the sake of her country. She realizes her female powers. She rejects male's dominance. This rejection coincides with her rejection of the colonial dominance. This relationship between women's participation in national liberation movements and their feminist awareness has been established by Kumari Jayawardena's seminal work *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (1986). The national liberation movement or struggle for freedom has given them a chance to voice their rejection of male dominance. However, Palestinian "women have clearly prioritized the national cause over the feminist" (Abdo 7). They did not see themselves as part of the so-called feminism. They never expressed feminist beliefs or identified themselves with feminism.

Hallaj seems to say that Palestinian women liberation and the liberation of Palestine are interrelated. Both have to be accomplished together. In other words, Hallaj, as Kifah Hanna in her study of SaharKhalifa's novels writes: "sets women's freedom as an integral part of the cause of freedom in Palestinian society. In this sense, the process by which women can find liberation is analogous to that by which land can be liberated" (244). With Kareema's character, Hallaj sets the Palestinian women's cause at the center of her novel—next to the national cause. By making her protagonist rebel against the traditions and occupation, Hallaj renders the feminist and nationalist dimensions in the novel parallel. In this sense, Hallaj reinforces the importance of approaching women's freedom with the same liberal attitude with which Palestinians approach their national cause. Hallaj stresses "the fact that they need to liberate women who constitute half of society first in order to be able to liberate the country" (Hanna 252). Hallaj believes that the Palestinians cannot attain victory in their struggle against the Zionist occupation without liberating the Palestinian woman from man's tyranny.

Hallaj's novel shows the dual nature of the oppression that the Palestinian women have to endure: the oppression of a patriarchal society and that of the Israeli occupation. The character Kareema pinpoints the different problems Palestinian women have to overcome. She has to struggle against the oppression of a patriarchal society and, at the same time, against the oppression of the colonial power. Here Kareema stands for those Palestinian women who succeed in combining both feminist consciousness and national commitment. For this reason, the feminist causes, in Hallaj's novel, and the nationalist causes are set as parallels. In this regard, *Refugee without Refuge* is a quest for freedom and independence.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict enables Kareema to participate in the national and political movements and gives her the chance to trespass previously prohibited domains because such national conflicts and crises disrupt the old traditional social structures. As Kifah Hanna writes: "One of the inevitable outcomes of war and revolution, the absence of men (whether through immigration or martyrdom), has imposed new responsibilities on Arab women, forcing them to adopt non-traditional roles in their society and to participate, in novel ways, in helping their community survive" (3). It becomes a question of life and death. It is a conflict between survival and perishing. Here Hallaj's novel is a celebration of the Palestinian women's achievements and endurance. It is a celebration of their efforts in keeping the Palestinian cause as

well as society alive.

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